

REMARKS

Claims 42-51 are pending in the above-identified application.

In the Office Action, Claims 42-51 were rejected.

In this Amendment, Claim 1 is amended.

Accordingly, Claims 42 - 51 are at issue.

I. 35 U.S.C. § 112 Indefiniteness Rejection of Claims

Claims 42-51 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. The Examiner states the claims are indefinite because it is not clear which unit is referenced as “said unit” in claim 42 as amended. The Examiner further states that the claims are indefinite because it is not clear how a unit of a polymer can comprise a molecular weight.

Applicants have appropriately amended Claim 42 so as to recite “said selected unit comprises a molecular weight greater than 1,000,000.” This amendment finds support in the specification, namely on page 6, lines 2 – 4.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the claim rejections be withdrawn.

II. 35 U.S.C. § 103 Obviousness Rejection of Claims

Claims 42-51 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over any one of EP 0818474, EP 0818420 and Inagaki et al in view of DE 4444032, Elfine, Monick et al, Horton and Ramirez et al. Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

Claim 42 is directed to a cleansing method, which comprises the steps of providing a cleansing processing agent, contacting the agent with a material to be cleaned without requiring a pre-treatment for swelling the agent, the material to be cleaned containing at least one of a heavy metal, ammonia, and amine compound, and absorbing the at least one of a heavy metal, ammonia, and an amine compound from the material to be cleaned.

The cleansing processing agent comprises a hydrolyzed polymer having an acrylonitrile unit, a unit selected from the group consisting of styrene, conjugated diene, and a combination thereof, hydrophilic groups introduced into said acrylonitrile unit by adding an acid or an alkali thereto, and ion groups being introduced into said acrylonitrile unit and said unit selected from the group consisting of styrene, conjugated diene, and a combination thereof, said polymer comprising said acrylonitrile unit and 20 to 95 mol% of said unit selected from the group consisting of styrene, conjugated diene and a combination thereof, and said polymer present in pieces not larger than 3.5 mesh, and said selected unit comprises a molecular weight less than about 1,000,000.

Thus, the cleansing processing agent includes a combination of ion groups, such as sulfate, and hydrophilic groups, such as amide, or carboxylic acid groups obtained by hydrolysis of acrylonitrile groups, such as acid and alkali agents. The hydrophilic groups contribute to improving hydrophilicity with respect to water and exhaust gas.

In contrast, none of the cited references, either singly or in combination with each other, teach or disclose a cleansing agent that contains an acrylonitrile unit and hydrophilic groups.

Moreover, amended Claim 42 recites that “contacting said agent with a material to be cleaned *without requiring a pre-treatment for swelling said agent*, the material to be cleaned containing at least one of a heavy metal, ammonia, and amine compound.”

All of the cited references are silent about not requiring a swelling pre-treatment of the cleansing agent before a contact with the material to be cleaned.

Thus, for at least the above discussed reasons, the cited references may not properly be combined to reject Claim 42.

Accordingly, Claim 42 is allowable over the cited references, taken singly or in combination, as are dependent Claims 43 – 51 for at least the same reasons.

III. Conclusion

In view of the above amendments and remarks, Applicant submits that Claims 42 – 51 are clearly allowable over the cited prior art, and respectfully requests early and favorable notification to that effect.

Respectfully submitted,

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